

# ST JOHN PASSION



Bob Chilcott

## Cantores Oecumenica

10th Anniversary Performance

Evangelist -	<b>Christopher Turner</b>
Jesus -	<b>Adam Marsden</b>
Pilate -	<b>Frazer Scott</b>
Soprano -	<b>Jean Tragen</b>
Guest Organist -	<b>Jonathan Scott</b>
Cello -	<b>Sophie Holt</b>
Conductor -	<b>Neil Provost</b>

**Holy Angels Church, Halebarns**

Sunday 9th April 2017

## **Sopranos**

Lorna Barton

Jean Brookes

Sue Brown

Patricia Brown

Marie Dixon

Margaret Dyson

Rhiannon Healey-Provost

Jo O'Connor

Sue McEwan

Carole McNab

Patsy Newhouse

Jennifer Nugent

Frances Provost

Jean Tragen

Kath Whyte

Clare Wilkinson-Kirsop

Lucy Yardley

## **Altos**

Adrienne Davies

Liz Dunn

Sally Peterken

Hazel Pryor

Adrienne Thompson

Christine Underwood

## **Bass**

Michael Brown

Michael Cummings

Trevor Gilmore

Roy Jervis

Keith Lewis

Ian Provost

## **Tenors**

Tony Campion

Steve Crowther

Alan Johnston

Kevin McAloon

Ted Thompson



Bob Chilcott is an internationally known and respected composer who works with many choral organizations and festivals. He was a chorister and Choral Scholar at King's College Cambridge and sang with the King's Singers for 12 years.

Since 1997 Bob has been a full-time conductor and composer. He conducted the choir of London's Royal College of Music until 2003, when he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers. He has conducted other distinguished choirs in Berlin, Canada, Lithuania, New Zealand and Japan and has many critically acclaimed recordings.



The St John Passion was a commissioned work for Matthew Owens and the Choir of Wells Cathedral. The first performance was given on Palm Sunday, 23rd March 2013.

"The whole work is about the death of Jesus, and in the end, we realise that it is also about our own death. It is a heartfelt blend of words and music, the one informing the other" writes Bob Chilcott.

In composing the Passion, Chilcott has been very aware of the towering example of J. S. Bach, as well as the contemporary sacred music of Arvo Pärt and James MacMillan. Chilcott's music grows from the text, which is very carefully chosen. The medieval poetry used here speaks to him in recognition of how much mortal man holds onto earthly pleasures, while at the same time wanting to praise God in Jesus. This is most evident in the Meditation 'Miserere, my Maker', which he calls a 'Love Song to God'. In this poem he finds the human in the heavenly; the medieval and Renaissance poetry in particular move the composer deeply: 'These poets articulate the human dimension of religion', he says. From all of the above, it is clear that Chilcott is a great communicator who chooses his texts carefully.

The Evangelist (tenor) narrates the action of St John's Gospel as heard in 'the vital language of the King James Bible'. Chilcott says that he is fortunate to have sung the part of the Evangelist in Bach's Passions several times, but he remembers with particular warmth the impact of the simple Renaissance versions of the Passiontide music chanted by the Dean and Chaplain of King's College Cambridge in Holy Week. 'The austerity, the agony and ultimately the grace of this story have inspired me to write this piece', he says. Reviewers have described his work as 'a mighty setting of words from the Gospel of St John'.

Chilcott's lyrical writing for the Evangelist throughout this work enables the

narrative to gain momentum as the drama builds. The choir portrays the mob in the Garden of Gethsemane; they comment on Peter's denial and Pilate's words; then speak at the Crucifixion itself, with the Evangelist and Jesus. The small parts of A Woman, Peter, Officer and Servant are sung by choir members.

The four Meditations allow passages of quiet reflection. In two of these, the soprano soloist is supported by the chorus. All of the Meditations are settings of poems from the 13th to the early 17th century.

The five hymns (chorales) are settings of familiar words but with new music. They were written for the audience/congregation to sing with the chorus, and we have printed them on a separate sheet. The hymns have also been published separately, for the use of church choirs not large enough to perform the whole Passion.

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## Choir

***Cantores Oecumenica*** was officially formed under its new name in 2012 although the choir has been performing together since 2008. Over the years numbers attending performances have risen year on year from only forty to over two hundred. Performances are always free entry with all donations collected at performances going to nominated charities. Palm Sunday 2016 raised just over £1,100!



The choir is headed by our Musical Director and Principal Conductor, Neil Provost, supported by our Musical Consultant, Paul Provost (Rector Chori - Southwell Minster). Cantores Oecumenica is a

voluntary, not-for-profit organisation. All expenses are covered by individual sponsors with voluntary support from members of the choir.

New members are always welcome and membership is free. We rehearse on Thursdays at Christ Church, Timperley from 7.15pm. If you are interested in taking part in any of our performances please go to our website [www.cantoresoec.org](http://www.cantoresoec.org) for further details. Sponsorship is always welcome too!

This year we have aimed to support our sponsors by making our first foray into 'crowdfunding' with some success. You can find out more about this by visiting our website.

**Christopher Turner** was born in Birmingham, read Music at the University of Hull, furthering his studies with Barbara Robotham at the Royal Northern College of Music and at the National Opera Studio, where he was sponsored by the Scottish Endowment Trust and The Friends of Covent Garden. He has received many prizes, including The Michael and Joyce Kennedy Prize for Singing Strauss, The Frederic Cox Prize, the Elizabeth Harwood Prize, and, most recently, a Countess of Munster 'Young Star' Award and the Sybil Tutton Award from the Musicians Benevolent Fund. He was also a major scholar of the Sir Peter Moores Foundation.



Christopher made his professional début as Dr Blind *Die Fledermaus* for Scottish Opera On Tour before joining the Young Singers Programme at English National Opera where his roles included Robert Wilson *Doctor Atomic*, First Armed Man/ First Priest *The Magic Flute*, Beppe *Pagliacci*, Simpleton *Boris Godunov*, Spoletta *Tosca*, Pong *Turandot* and Messenger *Aida*. Since then he has sung Don Ottavio (Opera North/Diva Opera in France), Roderigo *Otello* (Opera North), Janek *The Makropulos Case* and Esquire *Parsifal* (English National Opera) Borsa *Rigoletto* and Pong *Turandot* (Scottish Opera), Dr Caius *Falstaff* (Opera Holland Park), Damon *Acis and Galatea*, Prunier *La Rondine* and Iro *The Return of Ulisses* (Iford Arts), title role Albert Herring (Mid Wales Opera), Tebaldo *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Chelsea Opera Group), Ecclitico *Il Mondo della Luna* (English Touring Opera) and Artemidoro in Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio* (Bampton Classical Opera). He recently made his Italian debut singing Inquisitor/Sultan Achmet in *Candide* (Opera de Firenze).

Christopher performs regularly in concert and his performances have taken him throughout the UK, Europe and the Far East. Recent engagements include Beethoven Ninth Symphony with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall and with the Philharmonia at the Lichfield Festival, Mozart Requiem and Messiah with the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square, and Messiah at Cadogan Hall with the London Chamber Orchestra.

## Jesus

**Adam Marsden** studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Robert Alderson, the Royal Academy of Music Opera course where he studied with Mark Wildman, Dominic Wheeler and Peter Robinson and at the National Opera Studio, London. Adam is also a Georg Solti Academia Scholar and a Samling Artist.

His operatic roles include Prince Yamadori (Madame Butterfly) for the Glyndebourne Tour, Ufficiale (Il Barbieri di Siviglia) and cover Bosun (Billy Budd) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera, cover Father (Hansel und Gretel) for Opera North, James Meredith in the world premiere of Kommilitonen! composed by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and directed by David Pountney, Somarone (Beatrice et Benedict) conducted by Sir Colin Davis and directed by John Copley, Sprecher (Die Zauberflöte), Tiger Brown (Die Dreigroschenoper) and Musiklehrer (Ariadne auf Naxos) for RAO,



Father (cover) (Hansel and Gretel) Opera North, Zuniga (Carmen) for Mananan International Opera Festival, Don Inigo Gomez (L'Heure Espagnole), Antonio (Le nozze di Figaro), Kuligin (Katya Kabanova) for RNCM Opera and Jupiter (Castor et Pollux) for the Yorke Trust. Adam premiered the revised Small Tales, Tall Tales A Grimm sequence by Kenneth Hesketh with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's Ensemble 10/10.

On the concert platform Adam's performances have included the role of Balstrode (Peter Grimes), Beethoven Symphony No. 9, Elgar's Coronation Ode, Handel's Hercules, Israel in Egypt and Messiah, Janacek's Glagolitic Mass, Mendelssohn's St. Paul and Elijah, Mozart Requiem and Coronation Mass, Orff's Carmina Burana, Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle and Lakai for Michael Kennedy's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday concert with the Hallé Orchestra and Sir Mark Elder.

## Pilate

**Frazer Scott** studied with Prof. Susan McCulloch on the Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Opera Course, where he was supported by Serena Fenwick, BMRDB, The Worshipful Company of Ironmongers, The Behrens Foundation, The Stanley Picker Trust and the Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship Trust. Prior to this, he was awarded a First Class Honours BMus Degree from Birmingham Conservatoire, where he studied with Henry Herford.

Notable Operatic roles include Geronimo, The Secret Marriage (British Youth Opera – 4\* The Independent) Pantalone The Adventures of Pinocchio (GSMD)

Jupiter [cover] Orpheus in the Underworld (Scottish Opera). Concert appearances include Locke's The Tempest (The OAE, Sam Wannamaker Playhouse), Mozart's Requiem (for OSJ, St John's Smith Square and CBSO, Symphony Hall), Haydn's The Creation (as part of a BBC Birth of British Music documentary with the BBCCO).

Frazer is a founding Song in the City singer (curated by Gavin Roberts) and twice appeared as part of Graham Johnson's Song Recital Series (GSMD). Singing a recital of Wolf and Schumann, Frazer made his St Martin's in the Fields debut with New Zealand pianist, Catherine Norton, in 2011. At the Wigmore Hall final of the 2013 Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards, Frazer was awarded the Audience Prize and 1st Runner Up.

Frazer appears as a soloist on the Orchestra of St John's recording of Mozart's Requiem. He is also the voice of Kettle Chips adverts across the USA and was previously a featured voice, singing jingles for BBC Radio.



## Soprano

**Jean Tragen** has been an enthusiastic singer since the age of five, singing solos with the school choir. She was trained by Connie Astington (London) and Doris Gambell (Auntie Doris from BBC Children's Hour). She joined the Hallé choir as a chorister and also sang in the semi-chorus for 25 years. During this time, she performed under Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Charles Grove, Mark Elder and many other well known conductors. She has also sung and been televised at Lincoln and Chester Cathedrals and made recordings of the Dream of Gerontius and Belshazzar's Feast with Sir John Barbirolli and Owain Arwel Hughes.



Jean has been the leader and soloist at the Manchester Reform Synagogue for many years and trained a youth choir there.

For the past 20 years, Jean has sung with the Altrincham Choral Society, occasionally performing as a soloist. She has also sung for the past four years with Cantores Oecumenica and was our soprano soloist last year.

## Guest Organist

**Jonathan Scott** enjoys a hugely varied performing career on a diverse spectrum of keyboard instruments performing music which spans the entire classical repertoire. In addition to his career as pianist and organist Jonathan has a busy concert schedule with his pianist brother, Tom Scott, performing as Scott Brothers Duo.

Born in Manchester, Jonathan studied piano and organ at Chetham's School of Music before gaining a scholarship on both instruments to attend the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM). With the aid of a Countess of Munster Scholarship he was able to continue his studies in USA and Holland. Jonathan won the coveted Worshipful Company of Musicians WT Best Scholarship and gold medal, and is a Freeman of The City of London. He has been a member of the keyboard staff at RNCM since 2001 and is also Associate Artist of the Bridgewater Hall



Jonathan's recent performances have included numerous solo recitals as well as concertos with BBC Philharmonic, Orchestra of Opera North,

Royal Scottish National Orchestra and solo appearances at the BBC proms, mid-Atlantic performances on Queen Mary 2 and a series of performances as organ and piano soloist at The Royal Albert Hall, London. His recent performance of Copland Organ Symphony was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and has just been released on the Chandos label. Forthcoming performances include solo concerto appearances with Hallé Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the premier of a new organ concerto by Karl Jenkins for the 2017 Hull City of Culture.

## Cellist

**Sophie Holt** may only be sixteen years old but has been playing cello for nine years! Currently, she is a member of the Hallé Youth Orchestra as well as being principal cellist for several of her local orchestras, including Bury Youth Orchestra and Bury Senior Strings. Previously she has been principal cellist of the Greater Manchester Youth String Orchestra.

Sophie also plays the flute, in which she recently achieved a Distinction in the ABRSM Grade 8 examination. More recently Sophie has begun vocal lessons and is working towards her Grade 7.





In addition to the Hallé Youth orchestra, Sophie is also a member of the Hallé Youth Choir which certainly makes her weekend's busy ones!

Sophie is extremely passionate about music and thoroughly enjoys the pleasures it brings. Not only has she had the opportunity to play in excellent venues such as the Bridgewater Hall but has also been extremely fortunate to play in and around Europe in places such as Dublin and Lake Garda. Sophie is very excited to see where her love of music will take her next and to see her playing progress even further!

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**Neil Provost** was born in Altrincham and involved in music through the amateur theatre at an early age. Starting piano lessons at age nine he progressed to the organ by age fourteen receiving lessons from Derrick Cantrell (then Organist of Manchester Cathedral).

He took his first parish post at St Mark's, Dunham just before his sixteenth birthday. At St Ambrose College, Halebarns he took a strong interest in choral conducting under the tutelage of John Chadwick and Michael English, who later became his organ tutor. Neil has gone on to develop his own unique style and methods in choral training and conducting.



He moved to St John the Divine, Brooklands in 1990 as Director of Music, training and directing a mixed choir. Whilst there a number of choristers gained places in cathedral choirs and he brought the choir up to sufficient standard to be invited to sing in Manchester Cathedral for Choral Evensong.

In 2000 Neil moved to Christ Church, Timperley where he forged a musical link between Holy Angels Choir and Christ Church Choir and some ten years ago began many successful Palm Sunday presentations which have included Stainer's 'Crucifixion', Maunder's 'Olivet to Calvary', Faure's 'Requiem' and two world premieres; Robert Steadman's 'Requiem' and last year 'Via Crucis', libretto by Neil himself in collaboration with Robert Steadman who wrote the score. The combined choirs, with guests, have also sung together for many years at Christ Church for Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols service.

The culmination of these efforts was the formation of Cantores Oecumenica (literal translation, singers ecumenical). Neil is Musical Director and Principal Conductor for Cantores Oecumenica.

### 1. Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle

*Bishop Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-c.600), trans. Percy Dearmer (1867-1936).*

Sing my tongue the glorious battle,	God in pity saw man fallen,
Sing the ending of the fray:	Shamed and sunk in misery,
Now above the Cross, the trophy,	When he fell on death by tasting
Sound the loud triumphant lay:	Fruit of the forbidden tree;
Tell how Christ, the world's Redeemer	Then another tree was chosen
As a victim won the day.	Which the world from death should
	free.

### 2. The Garden

*The Gospel narrative begins here and we hear echoes in the music from the first chorus. The Evangelist is agitated by the arrival of Judas with a band of armed men and the well-known story of Peter's violence to the servant is told again.*

### 3. Hymn: It is a thing most wonderful

*Music: Bob Chilcott; words: Bishop William Walsham How (1823-97)*

It is a thing most wonderful,  
 Almost too wonderful to be,  
 That God's own Son should come from heav'n  
 And die to save a child like me  
 And yet I know that it is true;  
 He chose a poor and humble lot,  
 And wept and toiled and mourned and died,  
 For love of those who loved, who loved him not  
 It is most wonderful to know  
 His love for me so free and sure;  
 But 'tis more wonderful to see  
 My love for him so faint, so faint and poor.

### 4. Peter's Denial

*This explores the stark contrast between Jesus' fear for his own safety and his dignity under interrogation. Solo voices and the chorus create a theatrical set-piece in which Peter is tested and broken while Jesus remains fearless. It is followed by the first Meditation in which yearning melodic lines draw the listener deep into the sense of isolation and despair.*

## 5. Meditation: Miserere, my Maker

*Words Anon. c. 1615*

Miserere, my Maker,  
O have mercy on me, wretch, strangely distressed,  
Cast down with sin oppressed;  
mightily vexed to the soul's bitter anguish,  
E'en to the death I languish.  
Yet let it please Thee  
to hear my ceaseless crying: Miserere, miserere, I am dying.  
  
Miserere, my Saviour,  
I, alas, am for my sins fearfully grieved,  
And cannot be relieved  
but by Thy death, which Thou didst suffer for me.  
Wherefore I adore thee.  
And do beseech Thee  
To hear my ceaseless crying: Miserere, miserere I am dying.  
  
Holy Spirit, miserere,  
Comfort my distressed soul, grieved for youth's folly,  
Purge, cleanse and make it holy;  
With Thy sweet due of grace and peace inspire me,  
How I desire Thee.  
And strengthen me now  
in this my ceaseless crying: Miserere, miserere I am dying.

## 6. Hymn: Drop, Drop slow tears

*Music: Bob Chilcott; Words: Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650).*

Drop, drop slow tears,	Cease not, wet eyes,
And bathe those beauteous feet,	His mercies to entreat;
Which brought from heav'n	To cry for vengeance
The news and Prince of Peace	Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods  
Drown all my faults and fears;  
Nor let his eye  
See sin, but through my tears.

## 7. The Judgement Hall (I)

*Again the Evangelist is agitated by his commentary, with a stark melodic line that increases the sense of menace. Pilate intervenes and the crowd's anger grows. But Pilate is indifferent to the people when Jesus answers with a question. The music gives us glimpses of the major harmonic still to come.*

## 8. Hymn: Jesu, grant me this, I pray

*Music: Bob Chilcott; Words 17th century Latin*

Jesu, grant me this I pray.	If the evil one prepare,
Ever in they hear to stay;	Or the world, a tempting snare,
Let me evermore abide	I am safe when I abide
Hidden in thy wounded side	In they heart and wounded side
If the flesh, more dangerous still,	Death will come one day to me;
Tempt my soul to deeds of ill,	Jesu, cast me not from thee:
Naught I fear when I abide	Dying let me still abide
In thy heart and wounded side.	In thy heart and wounded side.

## 9. Meditation: Christ, my Beloved

*William Baldwin (d. c.1563)*

*This Meditation looks at grief from the point of view of a figure close to Jesus. Chilcott gives this song to the soprano, whom he regards as Jesus' mother, expressing her eternal love for her Son.*

Christ my Beloved which still doth feed  
Among the flowers, having delight  
Among his faithful lilies,  
Doth take great care for me indeed,  
And I again with all my might  
Will do what so his will is.

My Love in me and I in him,  
Conjoined by love, will still abide  
Among the faithful lilies  
Till day do break, and truth do dim  
All shadows dark and cause them slide,  
According as his will is.

## 10. The Judgement Hall (II)

*But the Soprano's tender love is swept away as the action returns to the judgement hall.*

*Pilate finds no fault in Jesus and offers the rabble a prisoner in exchange. The crowd shout for the release of Barabbas. The harmonies move through several changes, accelerating the action, until once more the crowd screams 'Crucify Him'. Christ can now only be condemned to death. The madness and injustice of this scene give rise to a gentle setting for unaccompanied choir of the next Meditation which is marked in the score to be sung 'soft and inward'.*

## 11. Meditation: Away vain world

*The words are by Alexander Montgomerie(?1545-?1610) adapted by Bob Chilcott.*

Away vain world, bewitcher of my heart!  
My sorrow shows, my sin makes me to smart!  
Yet will I not despair  
But to my God repair,  
He has mercy ay,  
Therefore will I pray.  
He has mercy ay and loves me,  
Though by His humbling hand he proves me.  
  
Once more away shows loth the world to leave,  
Bids oft adieu with it that holds me slave.  
Loth am I to forego  
This sweet alluring foe.  
Since thy ways are vain,  
Shall I thee retain?  
Since thy ways are vain I quite thee.  
Thy pleasures shall no more delight me.  
  
What shall I say? Are all my pleasures past?  
Shall worldly joys now take their leave at last?  
Yea, Christ, these earthly toys  
Shall turn in heavenly joys.  
Let the world be gone,  
I'll love Christ alone!  
Let the world be gone, I care not.  
Christ is my love alone, I fear not.

## 12. Jesus is Crucified

*This is driven by relentless chords with the choir's insistence that Pilate pass the death sentence on Jesus. The Chief Priests insist they 'have no King but Caesar'. The Evangelist's subdued account of the crucifixion continues. Pilate is quietly seething that a Roman prefect has labelled Jesus 'King of the Jews' and we hear the familiar words of the next hymn*

## 13. Hymn: There is a green hill far away

*Music: Bob Chilcott; Words Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95)*

There is a green hill far away,	We may not know, we cannot tell
Without a city wall,	What pains he had to bear.
Where the dear Lord was crucified,	But we believe it was for us
Who died to save us all,	He hung and suffered there,
Who die to save us all.	He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiv'n  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heav'n  
Saved by his precious blood,  
Saved by his precious blood.

O dearly, dearly has he loved,  
and we must love him too,  
And trust in his redeeming blood,  
And try his works to do,  
And try his works to do.

#### **14. The Crucifixion**

*The Evangelist continues his narrative of the Crucifixion, while the music, like Christ on the cross, remains gentle and dignified, even when the Roman soldiers cast lots for His clothes. The grief of the three Marys and the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross flow into the final Meditation.*

#### **15. Meditation: Jesus, my Leman**

*13th century English, adapted by Bob Chilcott.*

When I see upon the Cross  
Jesus, my Leman,  
And by him standing Mary and Johan,  
With his back scourged  
And his side pierced,  
For the love of man,  
Well ought I to weep  
And sins relinquish,  
If I know of love.

*\*Leman=loved one*

#### **16. Jesus Dies on the Cross**

*This is a haunting montage of fragments from earlier parts of the work, creating profound compassion through its simple musical economy. Two solo voices sing Jesus' final words: 'It is finished'. So little music; so few words. Yet a deep human sadness is revealed in this brevity.*

#### **17. Hymn: When I survey the Wondrous Cross**

*Music: Bob Chilcott; Words Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

When I survey the Wondrous Cross  
On which the Price of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

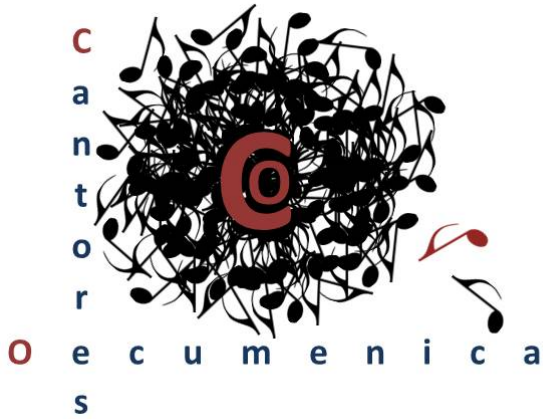
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all

**This performance has been given free of charge.**

**The retiring collection will be divided equally between, and given in entirety to the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) and Christian Aid.**



**Thank you for any contribution you are able to make.**



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the musicians, provided the posters and the programmes**

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